

CANINE SEARCH SPECIALIST

August 29, 2003

a. Position Description

The Canine Search Specialist is responsible for working with a search dog and reports to the Search Team Manager. He/she is also responsible for the care and welfare of the canines during mission deployment.

The Canine Search Specialist is responsible for:

- Searching structures, in US&R environments or other locations indicated in the mission assignment, using appropriate canine search equipment and techniques;
- Documenting locations of alerts and, if possible, triaging the status of victims for rescue;
- Adhering to all safety procedures;
- Cooperating with and assisting other search and rescue resources;
- Providing accountability, maintenance, and minor repairs for all issued equipment; and
- Performing additional tasks or duties as assigned during a mission.

b. Position Requirements and Criteria:

Individuals who meet the following requirements and criteria will be eligible to become Canine Search Specialists in the DHS/FEMA US&R Response System. The intent of these requirements is to select handlers fully capable of providing the search techniques and tactics required in the urban disaster environment. The requirements and criteria for the position are identified in the following categories:

- Knowledge
- Skills
- Abilities.

Knowledge:

The Canine Search Specialist must have:

- Practical knowledge of general search strategy and tactics;
- Practical knowledge of the technical aspects of search theory;
- Practical knowledge of the theory and techniques of searching collapsed structures;
- Knowledge, and the ability to provide first aid for canines;
- Completed the DHS/FEMA Canine Search Specialist Course; and
- Proficiency with basic rope techniques outlined in NFPA 1670.

Skills:

The Canine Search Specialist must have:

- Experience as a task dog handler/trainer (police, search and rescue, guide, etc.);
- An understanding of canine search operations including team size, check and recheck procedures, and observer responsibilities; and
- Competency in canine search handling.

Abilities:

The Canine Search Specialist must:

- Be able to conduct search activities in a disaster environment.

c. Operational Checklist

The purpose of this checklist is to define the duties and responsibilities of the Canine Search Specialist during mission operations. The list is intended to be a general summary of actions. It should be understood that:

- Some required actions may not be listed, but must be identified and assumed by this position;
- Some actions may be the primary responsibility of another Task Force position, but may require assistance and coordination from this position; and
- The actions are listed in a general chronological order, but may require deviation.

(1) Upon Activation/At Task Force Assembly Point:

- Ensure the readiness of your canine (health, fitness, hygiene, diet, etc.) for travel, including all specialized gear and equipment. Ensure the availability of canine securing harness, crate, hearing protection, and floor pad for travel on aircraft;
- Ensure possession of current certificate of canine fitness from a veterinarian; and
- Monitor the canine for adequate rest, injuries, stress, or fatigue. Report any deficiencies to the Search Team Manager and ensure a safe and secure place for the canine.

(2) At Point of Departure:

- Ensure the canines have an opportunity to relieve themselves immediately prior to departure;
- Ensure proper canine etiquette such as cleanliness, non-aggressive behavior toward other personnel or canines, etc.; and

- Monitor the canine for adequate rest, injuries, stress, or fatigue. Report any deficiencies to the Search Team Manager and ensure a safe and secure place for the canine.

(3) In Transit:

- Monitor the canine for adequate rest, injuries, stress, or fatigue. Report any deficiencies to the Search Team Manager.

(4) Arrival at Mobilization Center:

- Ensure that veterinarian services are available for problems that may occur within the disaster area; and
- Monitor the canine for adequate rest, injuries, stress, or fatigue.

(5) On-Site Operations:

- Keep the Search Team Manager apprised of any tactical accomplishments; and
- Monitor the canine for adequate rest, injuries, stress, or fatigue.

(6) Reassignment/Demobilization:

- Prepare the canine for transportation;
Monitor the canine for adequate rest, injuries, stress, or fatigue.